AIM

THE BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT

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HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS PROTEST WAR

THE WEEK IN NEW HAVEN

Branching out from the AIM office, a whole array of activities explored different approaches toward involving people in the April 15th Mobilization for peace in Vietnam. Tuesday afternoon some 50 or 60 high school students and children staged a "balloon-in" on the New Haven Green. A travelling band of peace players performed once at Yale's Beinecke Plaza, three times on the Green, once at the Yale theatre (outside), once at Hillhouse High School, and at three different locations in the Hill area. Audiences varied in number from about 15 to 40. The regular Wednesday vigil, which normally attracts from 10 to 30 people, was attended by over 125 last week, thanks to an energetic word-of-mouth and leafletting campaign by the AIM staff. Finally, Friday night an all-night "film-in, speak-out" in Street Hall attracted crowds of over 300 who were treated to coffee, donuts, singing, guitar-playing, and an impressive art show of paintings, collages, drawings, and sculptures on the themes of war and peace.

How successful were there experiments and what lessons do they hold for future efforts to win support for peace. One impressive indication of success may be the dramatic end of the week increase in sales of bus seats for the New York march. After

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Photo by Ben Lifson

These were among the many varied signs and people in the crowd of hundreds of thousands marching in New York on April 15th.

THE DAY IN NEW YORK

Have you read too much about Johnson's love for this country, about his feverish desire to get back to the ranch from which all good things spring?

Why wasn't our President in New York the afternoon of April 15? A good many other Americans were. I found many good spots where he could have joined the march:

Next to an old man in a grimy trench coat carrying a "Bring the Boys Home" sign;
Behind a white boy carrying a sign saying "No Vietnamese Ever called Me Nigger";
With a group of teachers who kept marching as the rain pelted them and the wind howled at 5:30;
With any group that was cold but determined to make it to the United Nations Plaza although they knew most of the speeches had been given.

But, you might say, our President is too busy to come to parades. He wasn't too busy to fly to Guam and back, setting a new exhaustion record. Suppose he was too busy to get away from the ranch for long: he could have just ridden on one of the 12 buses from New Haven to Central Park.

He could have heard Bob Cook start us singing, "We didn't

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AIM

Editorial Staff
Elizabeth Henderson
Noel Kane
Richard Beth
Linda Prokopy
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For information write, or call 787-0123.

new haven protest cont.

weeks of advertising, only about two buses had been reserved before the week of the 9th. But by Friday night the Connecticut Company's supply was exhausted; eleven buses were filled, and many calling for tickets had to be turned down.

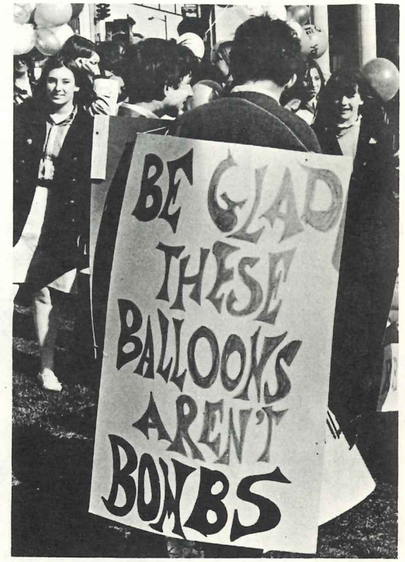
Among the more mundane lessons of the week were the practical problems of overcoming the built-in administrative resistance to any form of protest (or perhaps to anything strikingly new). The high school students originally planned to fly kites, but were refused permission on the grounds that kites are too dangerous for the Green. The travelling peace play had to revise its itinerary drastically, first because of the difficulty in getting permission to park a truck, secondly because at the last minute the promised truck broke down.

Some harder questions are what sort of people were reached and how effectively were they involved. Our efforts were directed both at those who are against the war but normally would not participate in active protest, and those who support the war. Inevitably our successes were primarily in the first category. The students at the balloon-in attracted little attention except from the police, but those who participated felt it was a very worthwhile experience for them. The mobile theatre perhaps encountered the most diverse audiences and reactions. A primarily sympathetic audience on the Green after the vigil found it moving and effective. A group of high school students jeered and hooted throughout, but were eager to talk seriously afterwards. Yale students for the most part just watched, interested but impassive. The reactions in the Hill varied from mild curiosity to warm enthusiasm. Perhaps the most interesting reactions were on the Green at lunchtime Thursday. Secretaries and shop clerks rushing about in their precious free hour paused to watch what was going on. At first several giggled self-consciously at the sheer unfamiliarity of the sight. But virtually none who stopped to watch left before the show was over, and no one was giggling by the end. If they were not convinced, they were at least troubled.

The effect of the sheer numbers participating in the vigil both on the participants themselves as well as their "audience" was also revealing. One regular participant did not feel there was a great deal of difference in his own reactions between standing with half a dozen people or many. But he felt there was a marked increase in the hostility of the passers-by--especially those in cars--when they noticed the striking increase.

A newcomer, who is usually unable to come at that hour, said she found the experience moving. She was especially struck by the effectiveness of silence, "almost like a Quaker meeting, but somehow public. It made me feel I was part of something important." Although estimates differ on whether there were many people that day who had never participated before, most regulars felt deeply encouraged to see some indication of the number of people of all ages and sorts who really care about ending the war but for various reasons just don't normally make it to the vigil.

The all-night film-in and art show attracted almost entirely students, but it attracted them in great numbers, and perhaps represented the most vital attempt at conversion of those who support the war. The prospect of free movies--even about peace--managed to attract a fair number of people who would never notice a vigil and might sneer at a live performance. The consecutive showing of Alain Renais' Night and Fog, a documentary on Nazi concentration camps, and the Japanese film, Time of the Locust, which shows scenes of devastation in North Vietnam against a sound tract of statements by Johnson, MacNamara, and Marshall Ky provoked some turbulent discussion with many points of view vociferously represented. As one enthusiastic member of the audience put it: "People you can't talk to are somehow reached by pictures."



An example of the gaiety, color and ingenuity of Junior AIM's "balloon-in." Despite a cold, windly day, 1,000 beautifully hand-decorated balloons were released.

Perhaps there is room in the future both for the kind of active participation which boosts the morale of those who are already committed and for the kind of audience participation which may move some hawks to talk of peace. For the war goes on. But so does the Wednesday vigil; the concept of mobile theatre will be explored further; and there will be much room for creative, workable ideas that will help us convince people that the war in Vietnam must be stopped.

Peter Rose

BERNARD B. FALL 1926-1967

It is hard to believe that Bernard Fall is dead. He was the most vital of men, exuberant, vibrant even, a fanatic in pursuit of life and truth. I got to know him in the early 1950's at Cornell, where he was preparing his first long monograph on the Viet Minh regime. Wherever he happened to be, people came to life, for he was argumentative, far from soft-spoken, and he didn't particularly tolerate those less well equipped intellectually--and there were all too many then, as there were in later years.

Bernard was not a "peacenik" --he was soft on neither North nor South Vietnam, and for this very reason he increasingly became a loner, a role he incidentally seemed to cherish. Without a doubt, he knew more than anyone else in the United States on Vietnam, a country he'd come to study with single-minded passion and concentration. His critics can claim that he wasn't always consistent, and they are correct; nor was he always willing to admit that he'd changed his mind. There are other critics who tried to argue that what he wrote could or should be dismissed because he was French, but they were wrong. True enough, Bernard was a patriot who was unwilling to forget the immense sacrifices, the high hopes, the valor that had existed side by side with the venality, the stupidity, and the arrogance of France's last stand in her Indochinese empire.

He could do this the easier since he was, fundamentally and always, more interested in the human beings than in the grandiose abstractions. Above all else, he had an abiding respect, even love, for the soldiers--not the high brass, but the poilu, the Vietcong, the American marine, who were fighting an endless, dreadful was in divided Vietnam. A soldier himself, reared in the stern discipline of the maqis (the French underground during World War II), Fall knew what war was all about, and it fascinated and horrified him. It was all too fitting that he should have died as senselessly as the little guys whom he so admired, and in their midst.

For one so young, Bernard Fall was a prodigious writer, and an excellent one at that. (When I once asked him how he'd managed to overcome academese he told me with a big grin that he'd taken a course in journalism when he finished graduate school, adding that it was the best investment he'd ever made.) The best way to appreciate him is surely to get Vietnam Witness, a collection of his best articles brought out by Praeger in 1966. Street Without Joy, rendered more poignant now that Bernie died on that very same road, is a first-rate piece of military-cum-political history of the French war in Vietnam. The most authoritative book is, of course, The Two Vietnams (translated, like Street Without Joy, into several languages) as dispassionate and accurate account of the two regime's as we have at our disposal, distributing praise and blame with that evenhandedness that could drive the committed hawk to as much despair as the committed dove.

And just shortly before he died, his last opus saw the light of day: Hell in a Very Small Place, a blow-by-blow account of the battle of Dien Bien Phu. I've not yet managed to read it, but I know a bit of how he went to work on it, with that tireless energy, that fantastic drive, that great sense of being able to tell a story that no one else was qualified to tell. For Bernard Fall had gotten access to the French military documentation (just how he did this I don't know), he'd traveled all over the world interviewing the survivors of that legendary piece of military idiocy, and he'd combed North Vietnamese publications on Dien Bien Phu.

The evening in which he showed me his prize documents for this book in Washington was to be our last meeting. I like to remember him, as he then was, admidst a family he adored, in a beautiful home his hard labors had allowed him to acquire. I am sure he won't be forgotten soon.

Professor Harry J. Benda
Department of History
Yale University

The mobile theatre performs on the New Haven Green with statements in song, dance, poetry and speech of opposition to the war in Vietnam.
Photo by Dan Church

TO THE WHITE COMMUNITY

WE, BLACK PEOPLE, ARE SICK AND TIRED OF OPPRESSION!!

NOTE: Socially, politically, and economically these are your own terms of oppressing my people. We are unaware of the technical aspects of eliminating our problems, and in respect to your own problems as we see it, your only problem is us, the BLACK PEOPLE. It is very evident that the law of simplicity is not applicable to BLACK PEOPLE.

YOU HAVE APPEASED OUR COMMUNITY LONG ENOUGH!! The time is now. You white people must realize that we of the BLACK COMMUNITY are prepared to leave this mystical conference table and go out and prepare OUR PEOPLE for the physical battle, for the enemy has given us 400 years to recognize him. All we have is the element of surprise for we are the minority, and now we have become aware of the fact that the professed guardians of so-called equality and the self-styled champions of oppressed people are sound asleep. The time has come when we must demand unconditionally our inalienable right to live as a free BLACK segment of this society.

The white man in this country is responsible for everything pro or con to the state of BLACK PEOPLE in this country. He has appeased our people in every respect of the word. Appeasement is detrimental to any man once he is awakened to it. It is also very evident that you, white man, have made every possible preparation in light of your wanning appeasement!! Legally, verbally and in any other way you may present this perverted picture of racial equality.

You have taught us the fallacy and hopelessness of our cause on the supposition that we are few in numbers, which in its own right has caused a breech among our own ranks...which is a typical white military trick. I say military because this is the way in which my thought has turned, which should go to show you one of the fallacies of your own tactics, over-appeasement. You have your own fine moral programs, social and political functions which serve your own moral, social and political purposes. They are of white origin, white purpose, and applicable only to whites.

The day will not be long in coming when the white community must have the cold and unadulterated truth rammed down their despicable throats until they have choked themselves on the poverty and ignorance and whatever other forms of inferiority the ghetto has produced, for it is their own product. It's a case of the wine maker refusing to taste his own wine. He knows that the sediment in the mixture will settle with aging and will enhance the flavoring of the wine. But to his own surprise nothing has settled. Now his arm must be raised so that he must be forced to drink the grapes and feel the wrath that he himself has produced. MY PEOPLE are of a rare vintage. We have aged in the cellars of ignorance long enough. And we have been awakened with the earth-shocking atrocities of the white man. Now our wish is to bask in the sunlight of social, political, and economic equality which the white man has and still is enjoying throughout his intoxicated existence, for surely intoxication is his reasoning. For the WHITE MAN, as we know him, would never ever knowingly oppress such a righteous and deserving people as ourselves!

The Conscience of the Frustrated Black Community, Everywhere!

This is the peace vigil that stood on the New Haven Green Easter Sunday as the first service in the newly restored Center Church was broadcast over national television. Rev. David Weinland, who had approved the planned vigil, commented favorably in his sermon on our presence and urged his listeners to join such actions for peace. The vigil line was picked up by the television cameras when Rev. Weinland referred to it in his sermon and was shown periodically from then until the end of the television program. The program was broadcast nationwide. One vigil participant even received a phone call from relatives on the west coast who had seen the demonstration on television.

The Hill Parents Association is going to remodel its office on Congress Avenue. They badly need contributions of both money and building materials. Call the HPA office, 776-1100, or John Wilhelm, 624-6810, for information.

NEWS FROM THE HPA

By John Wilhelm

Fred Harris spent most of last week at a leadership training conference at McCormack Theological Seminary in Chicago, sponsored by an ecumenical church group. He came back very excited, both about some of the ideas he had picked up at the conference and about some of the community groups he saw in Chicago. The coalition which Dr. King put together when he went to Chicago has, its own leaders say, no significant roots in the huge black ghettos there, and their programs appeal to middle-class people (such as the open housing marches, which may be resumed this summer). There is a whole new group of grass-roots groups springing up around the city, for the most part underneath or beside rather than within the existing organizations. At least some of these newer groups have significant active support in the ghettos, and Fred learned a lot from talking to them about organizing methods. Fred is hoping to send five workers from the Hill to Chicago for as much as a month to participate in training institutes for organizers.

Some of you have probably heard about the meeting held by the city at the Lee High School about the Model Cities Program proposal for the Hill. It was pretty distressing. The meeting was chaired jointly by Mel Adams, city redevelopment administrator, and Lawrence Spitz, recently appointed head of CPI to replace Mitchell Sviridoff, who's gone to New York. Basically, there were four groups of people among the 200 or so present: first, a large contingent of CPI and Redevelopment Agency employees; second, a small group of Hill Community Council (formerly Hill Civic Assoc., a predominantly white, Democratic-Party-oriented outfit) members; third, a small group of active HPA members and a couple of friends from the American Independent Movement; and fourth--much the largest--a lot of Hill residents, predominantly but not entirely white, who knew little or nothing about the Model Cities program, redevelopment, CPI, or anything that was said at the meeting.

The meeting was supposedly to get the people's ideas about what should be done in the Hill if--as is virtually certain--the neighborhood is selected as New Haven's Model Cities area. Adams explained that final plans are not being made now; rather, an application for planning grant funds is being submitted, and then if it is approved planning will begin. The planning grant application is supposed to include a general idea of what New Haven proposes to do in the Hill, but specifics remain flexible.

We have been to a number of "hearings" like this one in the past couple of years. They are cited on New Haven applications for Federal money as proof of "citizen participation"; what usually happens is some people express great enthusiasm for whatever plans are being made, some people express concern about what is going to happen to them individually, others object to the whole of whatever plan is being aired. Then everybody is thanked and goes home and the plan goes on to Washington just as it was drawn by the Redevelopment Agency in the first place, with perhaps very minor changes somewhere. That's "citizen participation", and we had seen it in action before. We didn't, therefore, expect much; but we were hardly prepared for the chaos which followed.

Adams and Spitz outlined in very general terms what the Model Cities program is about. Then, during the question period, HPA people tried to find out if neighborhood people would be involved in some real way in planning. We were assured that this is always done, and we objected that it has never been done. HPA people are tired of going to meetings, offering their suggestions, then having the "people downtown" decide whether or not those suggestions are worth anything (they usually aren't).

The HPA wants Hill residents, white, black, and Puerto Rican, to be involved in the planning continuously, and to have some actual say about what gets done. Most of the night's discussion revolved around this point, and there was little or no substantive talk about what might actually be done in the Hill (but, as one Italian man pointed out, there was no stenographer in sight to take down any suggestions the people did have!).

The meeting quickly moved toward a laughable--except that it was so tragic--chaos. Significantly, the largest number of people there had no real idea of what the argument was all about. They were not people who have been organized and educated, either by the HPA or anyone else (certainly not city agencies) to understand redevelopment or the poverty program. The HPA has heard the rhetoric about "citizen participation", and it believes that making that participation of all the people a reality is absolutely necessary if these programs are to make a real dent in our problems. A new outpouring of programs dreamed up and administered by the folks downtown misses the point. The people must be given a stake in their own lives.

Spitz got very upset that there was nothing substantive being suggested. He got up and and delivered a long, sometimes out of control harangue about that. Finally, he said if nobody else was going to get anything out of this meeting, he was. So he started taking votes. "How many people are in favor of a comprehensive neighborhood health center?" Maybe 12 hands, out of 200 people. "How many are opposed to a comprehensive neighborhood health center?" No hands. And so on, for about ten minutes. People--not just HPA people, but virtually everybody there--gave up. One black guy in the back moved we adjourn to coffee and donuts. No; more votes. Hardly anybody voted. People gave up, began walking around, drinking coffee, shaking their heads in disbelief. Of course we were all "in favor of health". He had missed the boat completely. He had no idea what people

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DEMOCRACY AND NEW HAVEN POLITCS

I. GOVERNMENTAL POWER

These articles are about the way politics works in New Haven. We believe that the better we understand this, the better chance we will have both of getting political power and of changing the system to make it more democratic.

The first article is about those who have the power in New Haven city government. The second will be about how power is organized in parties. The third will be about what is wrong with this system and how it could be changed.

To begin with, it is important to understand the formal system of New Haven government. We have the so-called "weak-mayor" system of government. This means that Mayor Richard Lee does not have all the power to make decisions in his own hands. The Board of Aldermen, with one elected member from each of the city's 33 wards, is the city legislature, and must pass on all city laws and propositions. The Board of Finance is another independent body, with one seat filled by the Aldermen, and the rest appointed by the Mayor, who also sits on the Board. This Board must approve all proposed expenditures. Finally, there are the important city agencies, like the Planning Commission, the Public Works Department, and the Board of Education.

INFLUENCES ON GOVERNMENT

But it is not just the formal organization of government that is important, but also who controls these powers, and decides what the government will do. This is the business of politics, and the men who are concerned with power are politicians. They are interested in maintaining and extending their power, and therefore, whoever can give them the resources and cooperation they need has influence with them, and whoever wants something from the government must be able to offer them something.

The businessmen are one of the most important influences. They are well organized to bring their case to the politicians, in the Chamber of Commerce, fraternal organizations, and local business associations. They are also active because they believe they have a right to the dominant influence as a result of their importance in the city. Business also pays large taxes, and when the city issues bonds to finance public programs, it is business and the banks who buy them. Therefore, the politicians need their cooperation to ensure the success of their programs. Finally, the parties need money for political activities, and business often supplies it to both parties in order to make sure they will be listened to by the government.

An example of the influence of business is the installation of the new lighting system in the late 1940s. It was businessmen who stood to benefit from the plan, who convinced the city to adopt the plan. This was not necessarily a bad thing, for the new lighting system decreased crime and auto accidents, but the point is that it was done not because it was a good thing, but because of business influence. This influence was also seen in the order of installation, which began with the business and better sections of town, while some poorer sections had to wait years until their new lights were installed.

Besides businessmen, the newspapers and radio stations have influence because citizens and voters read and listen to them. Friends of the politicians have influence because they can always tell the leaders their opinions and wishes. Yale has influence because of its financial interests and continuous concern with city affairs. Also, organized groups of citizens have influence because they watch the city's actions on specific issues and influences votes. Some examples are the P.T.A., the Save the Park Committee, and "one-shot" groups organized around specific issues.

THE POWER OF POLITICIANS

Finally, politicians themselves have power. They control parts of the organization of the political parties, and have support among party workers and sections of the people. This means they ultimately control votes, and votes are necessary to get and keep power.
In a democracy, the power of the people is supposed to be basic. But for them to exert this power, it is necessary to organize, put their votes and resources together so politicians will listen. The politicians, however, are concerned with power and would like to control it for their own benefit. Therefore, they organize the people in political parties, and the political leaders who have this control then have the power.

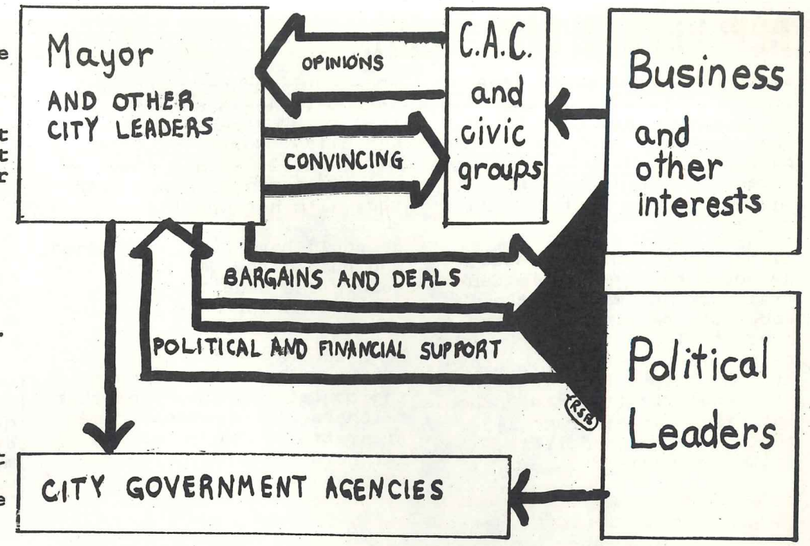
Now, these influences we have listed do not automatically work against the people. At one time, for example, a company was considering moving to a New Haven waterfront site which was then undeveloped parkland. They had a plan for the Federal Government to establish a Naval Reserve Armory on another part of the parkland, thus connecting their plan with the Federal interest. But in the political maneuvering that followed, it was discovered that the Federal Government already owned adjacent land and could build there. Then, other landowners offered harborfront land to the company at a good price, and the parkland was preserved.

Thus, the system may serve the public interest, but only as a side effect, not as the guide and moving force. In 1949, when the city's option to buy the waterworks came up, the public interest would have been served by the acquisition of this valuable property. But it was not done; the investigating committee recommended that it be left in private hands. In the following years, the company sold off large tracts of watershed land at good prices for housing developments. This land should have been preserved for water supplies, or the money could at least have gone to the city. In this case, the system just as easily worked against the people.

THE "POWER BROKER"

In such a system, the only way in which anything can be done is by compromise among different interests and influences. Therefore, it is the job of the politician to act as a "power broker," sounding out the groups and shaping proposals which they will accept. He must convince the other leaders that a plan is in their interest, or change it to to accommodate their interest, or gain their support by giving them something else which is in their interest.

Mayor Lee is an expert at this. When he wishes to introduce a proposal, he talks about it directly and indirectly with other groups of leaders and finds out their reactions. He then alters his plan to fit, at least in part, the views and interests of others, so that he will obtain their support. In this way, when he finally announces his plan publicly, he has many groups behind him.



Governmental Power In New Haven.—

For this purpose, he also established the Citizens' Action Committees. The members of these committees are leading businessmen and other citizens, often connected with civic groups, etc., who are concerned with education, renewal, and the other issues with which the Committees deal. Mayor Lee uses these Committees as a sounding board on new proposals and discusses his plans with them.

He not only finds out how they feel, but also convinces them of the merits of the plans, so that the members are changed into active supporters. Thus they also have the job of "selling" his proposals to the rest of the community.

This is the way his urban renewal program began. When he came to office in 1954, New Haven was a sick city. He was one of the first mayors in the country to see the possibilities of urban renewal. He talked about renewal with the other local leaders, made compromises and deals, and eventually got his programs accepted. For example, he was able to get support for Oak St. renewal, using Federal highway money, but in order to get the consent of important businesses, they were given the opportunity to build on the cleared land. The people who lived on the land did not take part in those councils of power, and so had no influence. And little new housing was built for them.

This shows both the good and bad features of the system. Mayor Lee could rebuild New Haven, but he could not rebuild its political system. Having all the interests in the community represented at the seat of power is not bad. Working out compromises and deals between them on the basis of power is not necessarily evil, if power is justly distributed. The problem of democratic government is to distribute that power justly. Political parties are the organizations through which the people are supposed to be able to obtain such power. Therefore, when we consider how we are to be politically successful, we must find out how political parties operate. The next article will concern this matter.

This is the first of three articles on New Haven politics based on interviews of Dave Murray by Rich Beth.

hpa news cont.

meant when they talked about wanting to be involved in the actual planning and administration of the programs which are going to change their lives. I have seen a lot of city officials, here and elsewhere, in action; but I was shocked. Spitz blew his cool; and everybody there, friend of the HPA or not, knew it.

The next afternoon at a CPI Board meeting Spitz allowed as how the discontent at that meeting might mean people hadn't been involved enough in planning. Rev. Edmonds of the Dixwell Congregational Church, a Board member, said he thought there should be a Negro involved in the planning. There should, of course: but simply putting one Negro into the situation doesn't deal with the basic ofjective of widespread citizen participation. We are not confident the city will ever do this, because it simply doesn't believe in it. Mel Adams once told Bob Cook it would be impossible to really involve neighborhood people, because it would take too long to get anything done.

I don't think anybody has ever claimed democracy is the quickest way to do something. Just the best way.

new york protest cont.

know at all/ We didn't see a thing" -- Germany of the 1930's. Or he could have torn himself away from the latest Lodge report to hear us ask, "How many times can a man turn his head and pretend he just doesn't see?"

If he had grown interested, he could have waited in Central Park and watched the serpentining line take five hours to leave the park. If he had been with the New England contingent, he could have seen students from many schools, including Tufts, Brown, Amherst, Harvard-Radcliffe, UMass, and Yale.

What would he have thought when Dave Adams said in Central Park, "Chaos, it's wonderful!"? Sorry 'bout that, Dave, but it wasn't chaos -- and if it was, I agree with you. I'm not arguing.

He could have seen Nina Adams, who pushed the New Haven days before she made the march, still game for some marching although tired.

He could have seen the first marchers lining the end of the route, cheering the other marchers on, offering food, cigarettes. The returning marchers clapped the cold away and the listening marchers clapped a greeting in return.

He could have made the final turn into the plaza at 5:00 and seen thousands still listening to the speeches or congratulating each other on their endurance. A blond said, "When the wind came up on Madison Avenue, I didn't think I was going to make it." But she did. And so did the 2-year-old on his father's back next to me, although he had been fitfully asleep for the last two hours.

N. K.

Coordinating Committee Meetings will be held at 8:00 p.m. on Monday, April 24; Monday, May 8; and Monday, May 22. These meetings are open to all who wish to attend.

AIM

A part of the Connecticut contingent in the New York march.

Independent Political Action Committee
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New Haven
Connecticut 06510

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